

Business MATCHMAKING



in partnership with



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Orlando Matchmaking Program Marks Nationwide Rollout by SBA, U.S. Chamber of Commerce and HP Of Billion-Dollar Small Business Contracting Effort

First event in multi-city tour gives small businesses in Orlando and nearby regions a chance to meet with government agencies and private companies with contracts for products and services

WASHINGTON – Already being called the largest small business contracting initiative in SBA history, the Small Business Administration and United States Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with HP (NYSE: HPQ), today launched the nationwide rollout of the landmark Business Matchmaking program in Orlando, Fla. (March 4-5).

SBA Administrator Hector Barreto, a former small businessman and well-known champion of small business who directs the agency's delivery of financial and business development programs to small businesses, was the keynote speaker at today's luncheon.

As the first stop of a multi-city tour planned through 2004, the Business Matchmaking program in Orlando matches small businesses with federal, state, and local government agencies and private companies who have actual contracts for products and services. The program is expected to make billions of dollars available in procurement contracts to small businesses over the course of the tour.

The federal government annually spends more than \$200 billion for products and services, and the government's statutory goal is to have at least 23 percent of that total – or \$46 billion – go to small businesses.

“The Business Matchmaking program is the largest national initiative in American small business history to bring small businesses and public and private organizations together at the same table for the specific purpose of awarding procurement contracts,” Barreto said. “This is a real program with a real mission – to give small businesses around the U.S. a chance to generate revenue by doing business with government agencies and private companies.”

The two-day event, at the Orlando Expo Convention Center, provides opportunities for small businesses to meet with government agencies and private companies through pre-scheduled, individual appointments. The meetings are scheduled before each event by having small business owners (sellers) and government agencies and private companies (buyers) complete online profiles. Based on the profiles, the best possible matches are created. In many cases, it is likely for a single small business to have numerous appointments during the two-day event.

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“We are happy to be able to launch our national rollout of events in Orlando and Florida, and get our program off to a positive start before taking the Business Matchmaking program to other great cities and regions around the U.S.,” Barreto said.

“Small businesses are at the core of the American economy, and providing them a catalyst to expand and grow their business through the matchmaking program represents a new and exciting opportunity,” said Thomas Donohue, U.S. Chamber President and CEO. “This program represents a unique opportunity for small businesses to get in front of ready buyers. Helping businesses find a way to grow will, in turn, help grow the U.S. economy.”

In partnering with the SBA and the U.S. Chamber on the Business Matchmaking program, HP will be at each event leading a team of experts in various fields who will provide training and advice to small businesses on how to grow their business through public and private procurement. HP is also providing staffing and technology for the on-site registration process.

“At HP, we never need to remind ourselves that tomorrow’s next business success story is no doubt brewing in someone’s garage or small office — after all, that’s how we got started,” said Mike Larson, senior vice president and general manager, HP Personal Systems Group. “The Business Matchmaking program is one of the most important and real economic programs of 2003. It also represents a true public/private partnership dedicated to helping small businesses, one of the cornerstones of the economy.

“Like our partners, the SBA and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, HP is 100 percent committed to the success of the initiative,” Larson added, “and we look forward to starting the program in Orlando and helping small businesses throughout the state of Florida find new business opportunities.”

About the SBA

The U.S. Small Business Administration, established in 1953, provides financial, technical and management assistance to help Americans start, run, and grow their businesses. With a portfolio of direct and guaranteed business loans and disaster loans worth more than \$45 billion, SBA is the nation's largest single financial backer of small businesses. Last year, SBA offered management and technical assistance to more than 1.5 small business owners. SBA also plays a major role in the government's disaster relief efforts by making low-interest recovery loans to both homeowners and businesses.

America's 25 million small businesses employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce, generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and are the principal source of new jobs in the U.S. economy.

About the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is the world’s largest business federation, representing nearly three million companies, 2,800 state and local chambers, 830 business associations and 94 American Chambers of Commerce abroad. Founded in 1912, the U.S. Chamber is headquartered across from Lafayette Square and the White House in Washington, D.C.

About HP

HP is a leading global provider of products, technologies, solutions and services to consumers and businesses. The company’s offerings span IT infrastructure, personal computing and access devices, global services and imaging and printing. HP completed its acquisition of Compaq Computer Corporation on May 3, 2002. More information about HP is available at <http://www.hp.com>.

¹Source: U.S. Dept of Labor; Employment and Training Administration; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Census Bureau; U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.